



USACHPPM HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS UPDATE

28 January 2005

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The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information as to its strategic or tactical impact on the US Army and should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available from the [Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center](#). The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

[Contact us](#) with issues about this newsletter.

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HOT TOPICS

Blackberry Thumb

26 January - WebMDHealth reported that if you send lots of text messages, you may have "Blackberry thumb." "The thumb is not a very dexterous part of the hand," says Alan Hedge, PhD, director of the human factors and ergonomics research group at Cornell University. "Blackberry users include a significant segment of the population old enough to be developing [arthritis](#) - and this can aggravate it," Prosper Benhaim, MD, associate professor of orthopedic and plastic surgery at UCLA, says. "And there different types of [tendinitis](#) . . . These tendons participate in controlling the thumb and are very sensitive to repetitive motions." None of the hand experts who spoke with WebMD has seen a single patient with Blackberry thumb. [View Article](#)

Cancer Passes Heart Disease as Top Killer

20 January - The Columbus Telegram reported that for the first time, [cancer](#) has surpassed [heart disease](#) as the top killer of Americans younger than 85, health officials said yesterday. While the number of deaths from both causes has fallen, the improvement has been more marked for heart disease. The shift was described in the American Cancer Society's annual statistical report, released yesterday. In 2002, the most recent year for which information is available, 476,009 Americans

Other highlights of the report:

- An estimated 1,372,910 new cancer cases and 570,260 cancer deaths are expected this year. Five-year survival rates have risen to 74 percent, from 50 percent in the 1970's.
- Lung cancer remains the biggest killer, projected to claim 163,510 lives this year.
- Prostate cancer will be diagnosed in about 232,090 men in 2005, and it will kill 30,350.
- Breast cancer will be diagnosed in about 211,240 women, and the disease will kill 40,410.

Cancer death rates have declined about 1 percent each year since 1999, thanks to earlier detection, prevention efforts and better treatments, experts said. [View Article](#)

FDA OKs Generic AIDS Drug Combination

26 January - ABC News reported that the Food and Drug Administration's approval of a generic and less costly version of a widely used [AIDS](#) drug combination is expected to expand AIDS treatment in the developing world. The FDA backing means relief organizations funded by President Bush's \$15 billion AIDS relief plan can buy the product made by Aspen Pharmacare, South Africa's largest drug maker. Last year, the Bush administration was criticized for refusing to purchase drugs that hadn't been reviewed by the FDA. AIDS activists contended the administration was trying to bolster the sales of U.S. drug makers at the expense of AIDS patients in the developing world. [View Article](#)

Flu Shots for Kids Urged

25 January - The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported that the nation should vaccinate schoolchildren to protect the elderly from [flu](#). Vaccinating about 70 percent of schoolchildren ages 6-18 against influenza would reduce public transmission to very low levels and save lives. Researchers say that children are the biggest spreaders of flu because their immune systems are not as robust as adults'. Once the virus is introduced into a school, it spreads readily and the children take it home. "Even if 50 percent of schoolchildren could be vaccinated, this would still result in a considerable reduction in transmission within the community," one researcher says. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta does not recommend flu vaccination for healthy schoolchildren. [View Article](#)

Mad Cow Hard to Get

27 January - The Globe and Mail reported that a person would have to eat 1.5 kilograms of brain and viscera from an infected cow in a single sitting to contract the human form of [mad-cow disease](#), according to a new study. Jean-Philippe Deslys, a prions researcher at the French Atomic Energy Commission, said that his research strongly suggests that existing measures to protect the food supply are adequate. His views, however, are highly speculative, derived from a laboratory experiment involving two macaque monkeys. Dr. Deslys also calculated that the risk of cattle contracting BSE from eating the ground-up parts of other cattle is considerably higher because diseases always spread more easily within a species. [View Article](#)

Obesity May Affect Prostate Screening, Study Finds

24 January - Reuters reported that obese men may get false negative results on [prostate cancer](#) screening tests. They said obesity was associated with lower prostate specific antigen (PSA) levels in men, which could give men a lower reading on the PSA test. Their finding may help explain why obese men seem to be more likely to die of prostate cancer. Researchers studied 2,779 men to see body fat somehow affected the sensitivity of PSA tests. None of the men had prostate cancer, but the bigger they were, the lower their PSA readings. It could help explain "the recent reports of inferior outcomes of prostate cancer treatment in obese men," they wrote. [View Article](#)

Researchers Develop New Treatment for Iron Deficiency

25 January - All Africa reported that [iron deficiency](#) is the world's most common preventable nutritional problem. More than 750 million children in the developing world have iron-deficiency anemia. Researchers say a simple sachet called Sprinkles could be the key to eradicating such anemia. In developing countries, the standard strategy for controlling iron-deficiency anemia is to use an iron supplement (ferrous sulfate) given to children as syrup. But the supplement has a metallic aftertaste, leaves a dark stain on teeth and can cause abdominal discomfort. Sprinkles -- sachets containing microencapsulated iron and other micronutrients as a powder that is sprinkled on food - has no such side effects. When tested in clinical trials in Bangladesh and Ghana, mothers surveyed found the treatment acceptable. [View Article](#)

Special Scan Detects Blood Clots in Legs

25 January - ABC News reported that a technique called computed tomography venography (CTV) can help doctors identify blood clots in the legs that could break free and travel to the lungs and block an artery, a potentially deadly condition called [pulmonary embolism](#). The current scan, CT pulmonary angiography (CTPA) can miss many clots in smaller arteries. Using both CTV and CTPA

increased the detection rate of thromboembolic disease by 20 percent. Pulmonary embolism affects more than 600,000 people in the United States each year, and more than 60,000 of them die, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. [View Article](#)

Study Links Obesity to Kidney Stones

Being [obese](#) or gaining weight more than normal increases the risk of kidney stones, especially in women who ordinarily run half the chance that men do of developing the painful deposits. "Fat tissue may decrease the body's ability to respond to insulin, which could cause changes to the urine that favor the growth of kidney stones," said Eric Taylor, a physician at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital. He said the study he led "found such a dramatic link between weight gain and kidney stones" that the next step is to find out if losing weight will lower the risk of having the condition repeat itself. Men who had gained 35 pounds (16 kg) since early adulthood were about 40 percent more likely to suffer kidney stones while women who gained the same over a similar period were about 70 percent more likely to have them, compared to people with normal weights. Women with the largest waist circumferences studied had a 71 percent greater risk of kidney stones compared to those with the smallest waists. Men with the biggest waist sizes had a 48 percent greater risk. [View Article](#)

Underreported Humanitarian Stories

24 January - Reuters reported that soaring tuberculosis deaths and the immense toll on people living through chronic conflicts in Chechnya, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Northern Uganda are among the Top Ten Most Underreported Humanitarian Stories of 2004, according to the yearly list by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). The seventh annual list also highlights the lack of media attention in the U.S. paid to unrelenting crises in North Korea and Somalia, an emergency in Liberia one year after the end of civil war, the constant threat of hunger and disease in Ethiopia, and how Burundi's health financing system excludes its poorest citizens from even the most basic health care. Read the [2004 Top Ten list](#) [View Article](#)

The 10 stories highlighted by MSF accounted for just one minute of the 14,561 minutes on the three major US television networks' nightly newscasts. In contrast, 130 minutes were devoted to Martha Stewart and 18 minutes to the indecency fine levied by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) against the National Football League for the Super Bowl Halftime Show.

Focus on Epidemiology

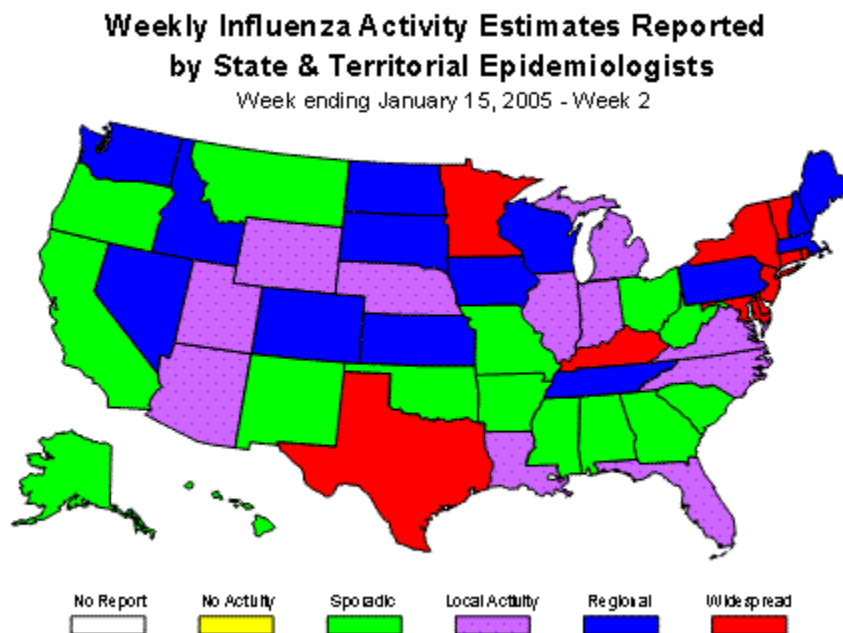
E. coli Infections from a U.S. Military Installation --- Okinawa, Japan, February 2004

21 January - MMWR reported that in February 2004, the Okinawa Prefectural Chubu Health Center and the Okinawa Prefectural Institute of Health and Environment, Japan, investigated three cases of [Escherichia coli](#) O157:H7 infection in a Japanese family associated with eating ground beef. Public health officials from multiple agencies in Japan and the U.S. collaborated on the investigation, which resulted in a voluntary recall of approximately 90,000 pounds of frozen ground beef in the U.S. and at U.S. military bases in the Far East. This was the first reported instance in which Japanese public health officials identified contaminated, commercially distributed ground beef that was produced in the U.S. This report underscores the importance of using standardized molecular subtyping methods throughout the world to facilitate international public health communication and intervention. [View Report](#)

Influenza Update

[CDC Weekly Influenza Report for Week Ending 15 January - Week 2](#)

From January 9-15, 2005)*, influenza activity continued to increase in the United States. Three hundred ninety (14.6%) specimens tested by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories were positive for influenza viruses. There have been two influenza-associated pediatric deaths reported to CDC this season.

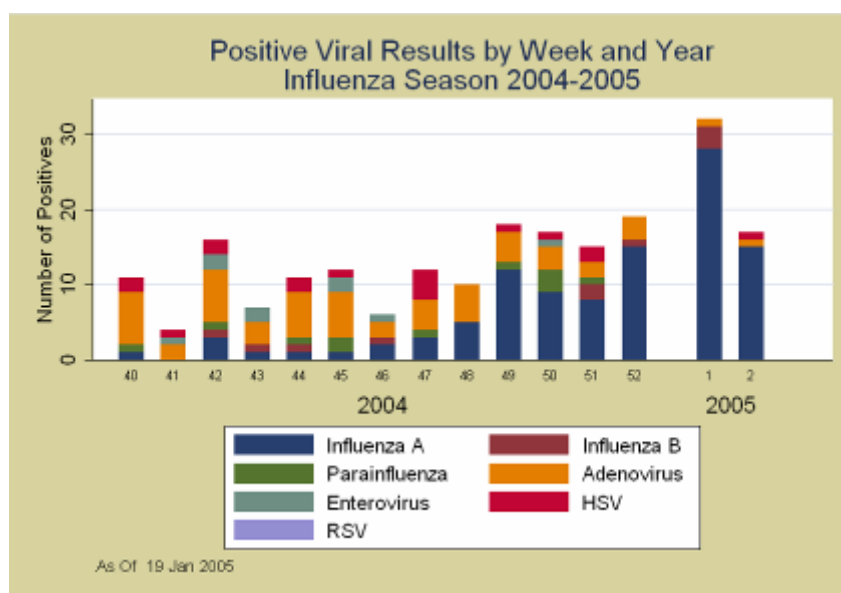


[European Influenza Surveillance Scheme Report for Week Ending 16 January - Week 2](#)

Influenza activity increased sharply in Spain, Portugal and Italy in week 02/2005, where children aged 0-14 were most affected. In the rest of Europe, influenza activity remained mild to moderate. The total number of laboratory confirmed cases of influenza per week continues to increase, but remains low compared to previous seasons. Influenza A is the predominant virus type, accounting for 96% of total detections in week 02/2005.

[DOD Worldwide Influenza Surveillance Program for Week Ending 15 January - Week 2](#)

Influenza-Like Illness - This graph plots the percentage of weekly outpatient visits at military installations that had an ICD-9 code correlating with Influenza-Like Illness as defined by [ESSENCE](#). Since 3 October 2004, the Epidemiological Surveillance Division (AFIOH/SDE) has processed 822 specimens as part of the influenza surveillance program. Of those specimens, 104 (13%) were positive for influenza A and 10 (1%) were positive for influenza B. In addition, 184 specimens are still being processed, the majority from a large batch shipment from NMRC-D, Peru.



Other timely information can be found in:

The current issue of the Army Medical Surveillance Activity's [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)
 This week's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Afghanistan: Whooping Cough Outbreak Kills At Least 28 Children

26 January - Reuters reported that the spread of a severe [whooping cough](#) outbreak has been controlled in the central province of Urozgan after health workers finally reached the mountainous district of Gezab earlier this week. Officials at the Ministry of Public Health said the outbreak killed at least 28 children in its early days but the latest reports indicate that the outbreak has been contained. Roads to the remote central highlands have been blocked by heavy snow. More than 10 doctors, equipped with antibiotics for 2,000 people and vaccinations for 2,500, were taken by a US military helicopter to the Gezab district, some 300 km south of Kabul. [View Article](#)

Kenya: Malaria Outbreak Kills 14 People

26 January - AllAfrica.com reported that fourteen people have died following [malaria](#) outbreaks in various parts of the country. Eleven people, all children under 12, have died in Kisii District since 1 January. In the neighboring Gucha District, malaria has claimed two lives. The district Medical Officer said another 422 people had been diagnosed with the disease. The outbreak occurred at the beginning of the year due to the onset of heavy rains last October and November. [View Article](#)

Pakistan: Gastritis Claims Four More Lives in Sui

23 January - ProMED reported that four more children died from [gastritis](#) in the adjoining areas of Sui, raising the number of deaths from the disease to 6 over the last 48 hours. Many people have become sick after drinking contaminated water in Sui. A doctor said that harmful toxins were mixed

with drinking water in the Sui area. He said that more than 40 people, most of whom are children, had been admitted to Sui hospital and that an emergency had been declared in the hospital. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Democratic Republic of Congo: Cholera Outbreak

26 January - IOL.co.za reported that an outbreak of [cholera](#) has killed 23 people in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo over the past three weeks and infected more than 850 others. Badly built latrines contaminated water supplies and triggered the outbreaks, which were centered around the towns of Fizi, Nundu and Uvira on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. "At least 23 people have died from a total of 855 cases during the last three weeks in the province," Dr. Ghislain Bisimwa, South Kivu's medical officer, said. [View Article](#)

Gabon: Typhoid Outbreak Extends to Capital

25 January - Reuters reported that the [typhoid](#) outbreak in Gabon has spread to the capital Libreville. The outbreak began in the northern town of Oyem in December, but officials said there were now more than 100 cases nationwide, including 12 in Libreville. The number of confirmed typhoid cases nationwide has doubled from 50 two weeks ago, but so far only one death has been reported. Water company officials have blamed dry weather for water levels in the river which supplies the city, but they have also admitted that the main pump which lifts water from the river to the city's water treatment has broken down. The fault will take six months to repair. [View Article](#)

Israel: Hospitals Swamped By Flu Patients

25 January - The Jerusalem Post reported that Health Minister Dani Naveh has instructed hospitals which suffer from over-crowding due to the [flu](#) epidemic to begin working in emergency procedure. Some of the nation's hospitals have been swamped with patients in recent days. On Monday, a 218% admittance rate was recorded at Lanyadu Hospital in Netanya. Soroka Medical Center in Be'er Sheva admitted 30% more than its full capacity, while a 120% rate was recorded at Asaf Harofe Hospital near Rehovot. [View Article](#)

Israel: Ministry May Offer a 'Carrot' to Keep Flu Away

26 January - The Jerusalem Post reported that the Health Ministry will hold its first-ever discussion on the possibility of giving incentives for getting annual [flu vaccinations](#). Ministry deputy director-general Dr. Yitzhak Berlovich said Tuesday night that he liked the incentive suggestion - such as offering people free digital devices for testing blood pressure, smoking cessation classes or a workout at a gym - to get them to go to their health fund clinics for the shot. "There is no such scheme anywhere in the world, but maybe we can start it." Berlovich said that only 40 percent of high-risk individuals were vaccinated against the flu this year. Occupancy in most of the country's internal medicine wards were way above average this week, ranging from 181 percent at Laniado Hospital in Netanya to 112% at Rebecca Sieff Hospital in Safed. [View Article](#) (registration required)

Uganda: Sleeping Sickness Kills 10

27 January - ProMED reported that the district council declared Kaberamaido district a disaster zone after 10 people died of [trypanosomiasis](#). The sleeping sickness is transmitted to human beings by tsetse flies. The councillors said the district could no longer manage the mounting cases of the epidemic. The District Director of Health Services, Dr. Geoffrey Balengera, said that by 17 Jan 2005, 10 people had died of sleeping sickness while 150 others had been diagnosed as having the disease. He said the infection rate was 2 percent per day, which is too difficult for the poor district to handle. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Airliner Water Still Has Problems, EPA Says

25 January - CIDRAP News reported that the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said last week that some passengers on US airliners may want to consider drinking only canned or bottled beverages, after the latest round of water tests again showed signs of potential contamination on some planes. About 17% of airliners tested last November and December—29 of 169 planes—had total [coliform bacteria](#) in their drinking water, but no *Escherichia coli* was found, the EPA announced last week. A finding of total coliform bacteria in water indicates that pathogenic bacteria could be present, while *E. coli* is a sign of recent contamination with human or animal waste. The latest tests show an increase from the previous round of tests last August and September, when about 13% of planes (20 of 158) had coliform bacteria in their water. But in that round, two planes tested positive for E coli. [View Article](#)

CDC to Loosen Flu-Shot Restrictions

25 January - USA Today reported that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is set to ease [flu-vaccine](#) restrictions this week and give its approval to states that want to offer flu shots to anyone who wants them. "We don't want vaccine to go to waste," CDC director Julie Gerberding says. "So if there are local areas where there's more vaccine than demand, they should loosen restrictions so people interested in immunization can get it." Much of the country has not waited for the CDC; nearly half of all states have done away with eligibility restrictions altogether since the first of the year. In most years, flu does not peak until February, so it's not too late to be vaccinated, experts say. But it takes two weeks for the vaccine to provide protection, so time is running short. [View Article](#)

Federal Agency Accused of Mishandling Avian Flu in B.C.

19 January - CBC News reported that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency was accused of mismanaging British Columbia's [avian flu](#) crisis last year - to the point of spreading the disease that forced the slaughter of 17 million chickens, turkeys and other birds. Producers and veterinarians told a parliamentary committee hearing that the federal agency ignored warnings it could spread the disease by handling infected poultry outdoors in high winds. CFIA president Richard Fadden reportedly acknowledged after the meeting that the risk of transmitting the disease through the air was greater than the agency suspected at the time. Critics have accused the federal agency of:

- Not consulting enough with industry and ignoring the advice of two veterinarians - one private, one who worked for the province - who specialize in poultry.

- Ignoring the industry's repeated requests that birds be culled in the early stages to stop the virus from spreading.
- Acting too slowly because of bureaucratic red tape. [View Article](#)

Hepatitis Outbreak Warning

19 January - The New York Daily News reported that Sen. Chuck Schumer is pushing for more resources to fight [hepatitis C](#) warning that could become "the AIDS of the 21st century." Suffolk County has recorded about 7,000 cases of hepatitis C, while 4,365 cases have been reported in Nassau, health officials said. But the number of people who may be infected and not know it could be much higher, said Dr. David Ackman, Nassau County's health commissioner. About 4 million Americans have been infected by the virus at least once, and close to 3 million are chronically infected, according to the Mayo Clinic. The virus can be controlled with early detection, but there is no vaccine to prevent it. Experts still don't fully understand how hepatitis C is transmitted. But the Centers for Disease Control estimates that 60% of new cases are caused by needles shared by intravenous drug users. [View Article](#)

Officials Brace for Possible West Nile Virus Outbreak

24 January - NBC4.TV reported that Los Angeles County officials are bracing for the possibility of an early outbreak of [West Nile virus](#) this year after heavy rainfall followed by warm weather. "We are ramping up now," Kelly Middleton, spokeswoman for the San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District in West Covina, told the San Gabriel Valley Tribune. "The rainfall and heat we are having is similar to last year's, and we are concerned." January's storms and this week's warm weather are combining to provide an incubator for mosquito breeding. That, plus the recent discovery of adult mosquitoes in local rainwater, has prompted early local mosquito-abatement efforts. Although experts said they recorded fewer cases of West Nile disease than they had expected, Whittier and Pico Rivera were considered "hot spots" for the disease last summer. [View Article](#)



San Francisco Bars Smoking in Its Parks

25 January - Reuters reported that legislators in San Francisco city voted to ban [smoking](#) in public parks, becoming the first major American city to embrace such an expansive ban on tobacco use. "This is the first one that includes all the parks and recreational centers in a county," said Michela Alioto-Pier, a city legislator who sponsored the proposed ban. It needs the approval of Mayor Gavin Newsom to become law. "It is a danger to our small children and not a particularly good example for them either," Alioto-Pier said in an interview. State legislators are also considering banning smoking along California's famed beaches, although Los Angeles and other areas have already barred smoking at piers and beaches. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

Australia: Salmonellosis

26 January - ProMED reported that Turkish dips have been blamed for a [salmonella](#) outbreak at a Brunswick restaurant that left hundreds of people ill. Health authorities have detected salmonella in 2 dips from the Alasya Restaurant -- hummus and eggplant dip. More than 720 people have told health authorities they fell ill after eating at Alasya Restaurant or Alasya 2 in Sydney Rd between 8 and 19 Jan 2005. The confirmed number of ill stands at 173, but will increase as more tests are completed. So far at least 25 people, including several children, have been taken to hospital for treatment. At least 50 victims have tested positive for *Salmonella sp.* [View Article](#)

Bangladesh: Tangail Deaths Caused by Nipah Virus

25 January - The Daily Star reported that medical experts confirmed an outbreak of deadly [Nipah virus](#) in three villages in Tangail where five people died and 25 more were reported suffering from viral infection since 5 January. The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) confirmed the Nipah outbreak. It said samples of blood and tissue of sick patients had been sent to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC on January 20 conveyed the test report that shows one patient is Nipah positive. The DGHS is collecting more samples to analyze suspected illness among neighboring inhabitants in the affected villages in Habla union in Basail. "We're very alarmed by the result and now have no doubts that the 'unknown' viral attack in Tangail is a Nipah outbreak," said Prof Mahmudur Rahman, director of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research). [View Article](#)

India: Hepatitis Outbreak in Kerala

21 January - Keralanext.com reported that in Thiruvananthapuram, cases of [hepatitis](#) have been reported in many parts of state with ten persons succumbing to the disease in the past few months. Kottayam district reported the maximum number of cases, including 10 deaths. The medical college there has treated more than 500 jaundice patients. Jaundice cases have also been reported from Thrissur, Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts. According to Additional Director (Public Health) Dr. M.K. Jeevan, contaminated water is the main source for the spread of the disease. If a contaminated water tank in the medical college had been the source in Kottayam, polluted local ponds were the cause in Thrissur and Alappuzha districts. According to Dr. Jeevan, the mushrooming of eating joints must be checked as there is no idea from where they collect water. According to sources in the Kerala Government Medical College Teachers' Association, 90 house surgeons, 165 medical students and around 1,500 people in Kottayam contracted the disease in the last six months. The condition of six doctors had gone critical and two of them died. [View Article](#)

Indian Ocean Earthquake & Tsunami Emergency Update



25 January - The Pacific Disaster Management Information Network reported that search and rescue operations for the 26 December tsunamis are largely over. The focus is relief, recovery and rehabilitation. The death toll is now over **280,000** people along the coastal areas of 11 countries in the Indian Ocean. Tsunami-related deaths have been reported in Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, Maldives, Bangladesh, Somalia, Tanzania and Kenya. The loss of life is particularly severe in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand. The death toll in Indonesia's northern province of Aceh on the island of Sumatra, which was close to

the epicenter of the earthquake, climbed to more than **228,000**, with tens of thousands people still unaccounted for. WHO estimates 80 percent of Aceh's west coast was damaged. The death toll in Sri Lanka climbed to 38,000 and is expected to go higher. In India at least 10,672 died. India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the southern state of Tamil Nadu were the worst hit areas. The death toll on Thailand's west coast, including the resort islands of Phuket and Phi Phi, climbed to over 5,300, including some 1,765 foreigners from at least 36 countries. The world's largest reinsurer, Munich Re, estimates the total cost of the disaster will exceed US\$13.6 billion. [View Article](#)

Malaysia: 14 People Die in Measles Outbreak

23 January - ProMED reported that 13 children and an adult from a remote tribe have died in a [measles](#) outbreak in the Malaysian state of Sarawak, on the Island of Borneo. The outbreak started about 3 weeks ago, with the last death recorded a few days ago. Some 66 cases had been recorded, with 14 deaths and some other cases which were "quite serious." The 13 dead children, aged 3 months to 5 years, and the man were from the Penan tribe who lived in a communal longhouse in Belaga, near the Bakun hydroelectric dam project site. Chan said the Penans in Belaga had never been exposed to measles. However, one of the tribe members married a woman from outside the area, and the couple returned to the settlement recently. [View Article](#)

Melioidosis Risk among Survivors of Tsunami - Phangnga, Southern Thailand

27 January - ProMED reported that [melioidosis](#), a serious infection caused by *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, occurs most commonly in Northeastern Thailand and Northern Australia. In Takuapa Hospital in Phangnga, Southern Thailand, on 30 December 2004, a patient who had suffered aspiration developed severe pneumonia, and two blood cultures taken on that day were positive for *B. pseudomallei*. Four more patients have since been diagnosed with *B. pseudomallei* pneumonia. All had aspirated during the tsunami. Two individuals had known risk factors for melioidosis (diabetes mellitus). All patients are currently responding to antimicrobial treatment. Given the normal mode of acquisition of the disease, people at highest risk are likely to be those who sustained aspiration or lacerations, particularly if the wound was contaminated with soil. [View Article](#)

New Bird Flu Outbreak Reported in Thailand

20 January - VOA News reported that a new outbreak of a deadly strain of [bird flu](#) has been detected in Thailand, prompting the government to declare a high alert throughout the country. In nearby Vietnam, the government confirms that at least six people have died from the same H5N1 virus and one-third of the country's poultry has been infected in recent weeks. Scientists found the lethal bird flu strain in 20 fighting cocks in the eastern province of Rayong and in 50 chickens in the central province of Phitsanulok. Officials say both



districts have been placed under a 21-day surveillance period and no poultry can be taken in or out of the area during this time. In Vietnam, at least six people who either ate infected chicken or had close contact with infected fowl, have died of the virus since last month, while one other person remains infected. The government says up to 10 more human cases are suspected. [View Article](#)

New Zealand: Ross River Virus Confirmed in Waikato

20 January - ProMED reported that a Waikato resident has a rare virus endemic to Australia. The [Ross River virus](#) case was diagnosed early in January 2005. The virus was contracted in Australia. The person was recovering, but symptoms could continue for some months. [View Article](#)

Outbreak of Infectious Diseases under Control in Sri Lanka

24 January - The Colombo Page reported that the Centre for National Operations (CNO) says that due to timely action by health authorities, the outbreak of infectious diseases is under tight control following the tsunami disaster. The CNO said that according to the latest figures released by the Health Ministry for the week of January 8-14, there have been only 135 cases of diarrhea and 579 cases of viral fever in the tsunami-affected areas. This is well below the baseline for epidemics. They attribute this situation to prompt action taken by the Health Ministry in deploying systems to combat the spread of disease as early as December 27. "This is all the more impressive considering the substantial loss of assets by the Ministry in terms of damages to hospitals and the lives of medical personnel," CNO said. [View Article](#)

Threat from Disease in Tsunami Area Reduced

25 January - VOA reported that the World Health Organization (WHO) says the rapid, efficient international response to its warnings of potential epidemics of disease in tsunami-affected regions has succeeded in heading off the worst. The U.N. health agency says governments and aid agencies must not let down their guard. Soon after the tsunami struck East Asia, the World Health Organization warned that 50,000 or more people could die from epidemics of diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, and respiratory illnesses. The Head of WHO's Crisis Unit, David Nabarro, says once the international community grasped the enormity of the disaster it responded quickly with supplies of safe water to prevent water-borne diseases, it upgraded sanitary facilities, and provided medicine. "The collective effort of the governments, the aid agencies and local communities has together created a situation where we will not get a second wave of deaths, because we have now got the systems in place to make it very, very unlikely that we will get any enormous outbreak of disease," he said. The tsunami that struck 10 countries in the Indian Ocean region has killed more than 250,000 people. The biggest death toll is in Indonesia, followed by Sri Lanka. [View Article](#)

Tsunami Survivors Risk Fungal Infection

27 January - Reuters reported that survivors of the Asian tsunami could be at risk of a deadly fungal infection. Doctors who treated an infection called [mucormycosis](#) in an Australian man who was injured in the disaster, fear it could be the first case of many. Mucormycosis is caused by fungi found in the soil and in decaying vegetation. It affects the sinuses, brain, lungs, skin and kidneys. Without surgery the chances of survival are slim. Death rates range from 25-80 percent depending on which part of the body is infected. [View Article](#)

Two More People Infected by Bird Flu in Vietnam

27 January - Yahoo! News reported that two girls have tested positive for [bird flu](#) in southern Vietnam and are critically ill in hospital. "A little girl from Dong Thap province tested positive this morning," said Phan Anh Tu, chief virologist at the Pasteur Institute in Ho Chi Minh City, adding she was aged 13. "Another little girl aged 10 from Long An tested positive on January 25." The first girl is the daughter of a woman aged 35 who died from bird flu on January 21. Investigations are under way to establish how the girls became infected. Both live in areas which have suffered outbreaks of the disease. The two are under respirators in a Ho Chi Minh City hospital. [View Article](#)

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No articles of note.

*Please contact [Eileen Resta](#) or [Tyson Grier](#)
to comment on or to suggest improvements to this report.*

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